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International Joint Commission
Fall 2008

IJC Works Toward New Goal for Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River

After considerable study and public consultations, the IJC has withdrawn a proposed Order of Approval and plan for regulating the flow of water from Lake Ontario to the St. Lawrence River through the Moses–Saunders Dam near Cornwall, Ontario and Massena, New York. The IJC also concluded that the regulation of water levels and flows should be based on a revised set of goals, specifically moving toward more natural flows to benefit the environment, while respecting other interests. These decisions were communicated by the IJC in a letter to the governments of Canada and the United States dated September 4, 2008.

The September 4th letter is the latest action taken by the IJC to review its 1956 Order, which approved the operation of the Moses–Saunders Dam in the St. Lawrence River, and its regulation plan, which is used for setting flows through the dam. To date, the review has included a $20 million, five–year study and two years of deliberation leading

up to the release of the draft proposal for public comment in March 2008. To engage the public in the process, 10 information sessions and 10 formal public hearings in key Canadian and U.S. communities across the Lake Ontario–St. Lawrence River basin were supplemented by many other means of public engagement. Altogether, the Commission received and carefully considered more than 1,200 written submissions.

In the letter to governments, the IJC also proposed forming a small working group to develop a mitigation and adaptive management framework in coordination with the IJC's work to develop a new Order and regulation plan. The working group would include representatives from the federal governments, New York, Quebec, Ontario and the IJC. By June 2009, it would provide advice to the IJC on a management approach (consisting of an Order, regulation plan, mitigation measures, and adaptive management plan) that would be mutually acceptable to the federal, state and provincial governments and the IJC.

Mitigation consists of measures that would protect shoreline property owners and other interests from impacts of water level fluctuations that might be caused by moving toward more natural flows. Adaptive management involves monitoring how water levels and flows affect the natural and manmade components of the ecosystem and making adjustments to regulation based on the results.

More information is available at: www.ijc.org.

Lake Ontario–St. Lawrence River Regulation: How We Propose to Resolve the Issue

By IJC co–chairs Herb Gray and Irene Brooks

The IJC is working toward a decision on the future regulation of water levels and flows that will directly affect the residents of the Lake Ontario–St. Lawrence River basin and the ecosystem for years to come. This is a historic decision. We listened to testimony and read the comments of many people who care deeply about future regulation. We thank the many stakeholders for contributing substantively to our deliberations.

By way of background, the governments of the United States and Canada asked the IJC to approve the international hydropower project—the Moses–Saunders Dam between Cornwall and Massena in the International Section of the St. Lawrence River—in the 1950s. At the same time, the governments asked whether Lake Ontario outflows could be regulated, consistent with the need to protect all affected interests under the Boundary Waters Treaty and to provide benefits to Lake Ontario shoreline interests by reducing the natural range of water level fluctuations. The IJC found that this could be accomplished and recommended an order and regulation plan that were then approved by the governments. Due to the integral role played by the federal governments, when the IJC sought funds for the study, the IJC said it would seek their concurrence before making changes to the Order of Approval.

Regulation under Plan 1958–D plan did in fact reduce the range of Lake Ontario fluctuations and provides substantial benefits to lakeshore interests in reduction of damages due to high water. We now know, however, that regulation also reduced the variety of plant species in coastal wetlands and had a negative impact on the animal populations that depend on them. This conflict is one of the central issues before the IJC, which also includes the need to account for social and economic changes, the more extreme wet and dry conditions seen since the 1950s, climate change scenarios, and advances in the science and technology for water management.

In March, the IJC released a draft Order and regulation plan—Plan 2007—and said that Plan 2007 was the best option that could be developed at this time, given the requirements of the Boundary Waters Treaty and the goals set by the two federal governments. Plan 2007 provided some environmental improvement and raised water levels slightly in the summer, though not during the seasons when damage from storms was most likely to occur. This proposal, released for public comment at that time, also included a policy for less frequent deviations by the Control Board from the plan flows, an adaptive management program and a restructuring of the institutions that support regulation. Significantly, it included an Order that provided for a shift to a regulation plan that would provide greater environmental improvement once the federal, state and provincial governments had implemented mitigation measures to address the resulting impacts to shoreline owners and other interests.

The public hearings and written comments showed that there is widespread support for restoring the environment within the context of protecting the other interests. Plan B+, one of three options developed by our Study Board, was supported by the governments of the state of New York and the province of Ontario and widely supported by stakeholders in those jurisdictions. These interests did not believe that Plan 2007 would do enough for the environment and some argued that it would make conditions worse. They opposed Plan 2007 as an interim step and recommended directly moving to Plan B+ as soon as possible. Others, including commercial navigation interests and most lakeshore interests in New York, opposed any significant changes from the status quo. Some lakeshore interests voiced support for Plan 2007, but asked the IJC to keep current policies, such as the current target levels and flexibility to deviate from the regulation plan, that were much closer to the status quo than to the IJC proposal. The Government of Quebec and stakeholders across the province opposed any change from the status quo until they were satisfied that Quebec interests would be adequately protected.

Under these circumstances, IJC decided that Plan 2007 was not a practical option for implementation. We also concluded that it is time for a new Order and regulation plan establishing our revised set of regulation goals, specifically moving toward more natural flows to benefit the environment while respecting other interests. We asked the federal governments to work with us toward these goals and proposed forming a working group that would include the federal governments and the IJC as well as New York, Quebec and Ontario. The working group would examine the potential impacts of moving toward natural flows and identify the measures needed to mitigate these impacts. It would also develop an adaptive management program. By June 2009, the IJC expects that the working group could provide advice on a regulatory approach that would be mutually acceptable to the federal, state and provincial governments and to the IJC. We believe that this process would augment our study and complete the tasks needed to resolve the outstanding issues. The IJC will continue working until we develop an approach to regulating levels and flows in Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River that fulfills the needs of the 21st Century, serves the interests of the entire basin and meets with the concurrence of the two federal governments.

Public Outreach Key Focus of International Upper Great Lakes Study

The International Upper Great Lakes Study is reviewing the regulation plan for outflows from Lake Superior in order to determine whether the plan might be improved to take into consideration changing interests and changing climate. The study is also trying to

determine if possible changes in the St. Clair River are a cause of lower water levels in the Upper Great Lakes. Given the importance of public input in the study process, outreach has been a key focus with efforts to engage a wide range of interest groups and to provide important information to the public on a regular basis.

So far in 2008, the International Upper Great Lakes Study has hosted 14 public meetings attended by nearly 1,500 residents throughout the study area. In addition, members of the study's Public Interest Advisory Group (PIAG) have delivered many presentations, including meetings of the International Association for Great Lakes Research, the Lake Huron Centre for Coastal Conservation Conference and the St. Clair Conservation Authority, among others. A Circles of Influence Workshop facilitated by study modelers was held at the Annis Water Resources Institute (Grand Valley State University) in Michigan and generated useful information from a group of riparians and ecosystem experts that will help develop evaluation criteria for alternative regulation plans.

Public Meeting Location	Date
Grosse Pointe Farms, MI	Feb. 20
Detroit, MI	Feb. 21
Bay City, MI	April 28
Port Huron, MI	April 29
Muskegon, MI	May 3
Duluth, MN	June 16
Thunder Bay, ON	June 17
Sturgeon Bay, WI	June 19
Mequon, WI	June 20
Little Current, ON	August 9
Parry Sound, ON	August 9
Midland, ON	August 11
Collingwood, ON	August 12
Owen Sound, ON	August 12

The public meetings were extensively covered by local and regional media and participants commented extensively on the impact of fluctuating water levels on their respective interests. For example, there were many similar comments from riparians regarding the problems created by low levels in both Sturgeon Bay (Lake Michigan) and throughout the Georgian Bay region of Lake Huron. In contrast, other participants reminded study managers of the extreme damage caused by record high levels in the mid–1980s as well as the ecological importance of more naturally fluctuating water levels. Many concerns were also expressed regarding downstream effects of any possible mitigation measures in the St. Clair River.

PIAG members have also become engaged in the work of the study's Technical Working Groups (TWGs), with a PIAG liaison providing input to each TWG and reporting back on scientific activities to the full group. In addition, the first two editions of the study newsletter, "On the Level" were published, with 1,500 copies of each distributed to public meeting participants, provided to libraries, posted online and distributed at other events such as the annual meeting of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative in Toronto, where Commissioner Sam Speck delivered a presentation, and the celebration of Lake Superior Day in Duluth, where Commissioner Allen Olson spoke. The study website (www.iugls.org) has been very active, with about 500,000 total website hits in the last six months alone.

Further Circles of Influence Workshops are planned for this fall, including sessions with First Nations and Native Americans. Additional public meetings are being planned for Northern Michigan and Ohio.

Participants at an IUGLS Public Meeting in Midland, Ontario on August, 2008.

A Century of Cooperation Protecting Our Shared Waters

In the early 1900's, the sharing of boundary waters between Canada and the United States was such a tense issue that settlers in Montana and Alberta were building competing canals to divert the waters of the St. Mary and Milk rivers for their own uses. In the east there was tension over sharing the Niagara River as hydroelectric production threatened to leave no water for Niagara Falls. Yet the two nations, which share a nearly 9,000 kilometer (5,525 mile) boundary that includes 134 lakes and rivers, have not had such inflammatory disputes over water since that time. This outstanding record of cooperation is due to a farsighted treaty and the remarkable organization it created, which serves as an example to other countries.

The Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 created the International Joint Commission to prevent and resolve boundary waters disputes between Canada and the United States and generally to deal with transboundary environmental issues over water as well as air. The Commission, which operates by consensus and has three Commissioners from each nation, has addressed more than 100 disputes. The IJC decides on applications for projects—such as dams—in boundary waters and sets up control boards to regulate the operation of many of those projects. This means, for example, that the IJC, under its quasi–judicial authority, manages levels and flows in Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River, dam operation in the Columbia River Basin, and the measurement and apportionment of water in the St. Mary and Milk river system, to name just three of the IJC's many significant long–term responsibilities.

The Boundary Waters Treaty provides that the Canadian and U.S. governments may refer questions or matters of difference to the IJC for examination and report. When the IJC receives a "reference", it usually appoints an investigative board or task force to examine the facts and advise on the questions. Some past examples include the Flathead River, water diversions from the Great Lakes, the Garrison Diversion, and air quality in the Detroit–Windsor and Port Huron–Sarnia areas. Upon issuing a report, the IJC may be requested by governments to undertake a continuing role to monitor progress in implementing the report's recommendations. The IJC generally appoints a board for assistance in carrying out these functions.

Under the 1978 Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, the IJC assists the two countries in implementing measures to restore and protect the Great Lakes and evaluates the programs and progress of the U.S. and Canadian governments designed to improve water quality. The IJC reports to the federal, state and provincial governments, and the public, on achievements and shortfalls in meeting Agreement goals. The IJC carries out this responsibility principally through its Great Lakes advisory boards and its Great Lakes Regional Office in Windsor, Ontario.

On the evening of June 13, 2009 there will be a public ceremony with the Ambassadors of Canada and the United States on the Rainbow Bridge in Niagara Falls commemorating the centennial of this unique treaty that created the IJC and a century of cooperation protecting our shared waters. The event will cap a week of cultural and educational activities in the Niagara region focusing on the treaty and our shared waters. Throughout the year there will also be events, conferences and other activities organized coast to coast recognizing the 100th Anniversary of the treaty, including the issuance of a Canadian postal stamp.

For more information on the **Niagara event**, please watch for the launch of a new website: www.oursharedwaters.com. For other IJC activities surrounding the **centennial**, look for www.ijc.org/BWT100.

A century of cooperation protecting our shared waters

1909-2009
BOUNDARY WATERS TREATY
TRAITÉ DES EAUX LIMITROPHES

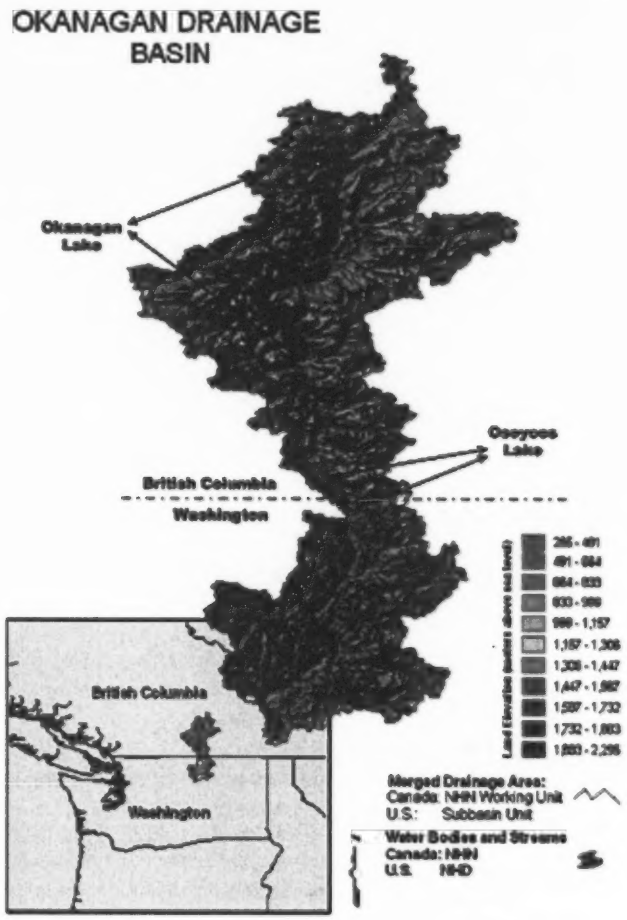
Un siècle de collaboration à protéger nos eaux communes

The Rainbow Bridge connects Niagara Falls, Ontario and Niagara Falls, New York.

Commission Begins Study for Renewal of Osoyoos Lake Orders

Osoyoos Lake straddles the Canada–U.S. border between British Columbia and the State of Washington (*see map*). Except during extreme high flows, water levels in the lake and outflows from the lake are controlled by Zosel Dam, situated on the Okanogan River in the U.S. just downstream from the lake. The original dam was built in 1927 and the present dam is owned by the State of Washington Department of Ecology (the Applicant), but it is operated to the satisfaction of both countries under Orders of Approval (Orders) issued by the IJC.

The current Order for the dam, issued in 1982, specifies the range of lake levels to be maintained throughout the year and the flow capacity to be maintained in the river channel between the lake and the dam. A Supplementary Order, written in 1985, allowed a change in the dam location and a change in the construction schedule for rebuilding the dam. Construction started in 1986 and was officially completed on February 22, 1988.



The 1982 and 1985 Orders terminate on February 22, 2013, 25 years after the new dam was completed. Washington's governor advised the Commission in a letter dated September 8, 2004 that the State intends to apply for renewal. When it does, the IJC will need to decide whether and how the Orders should be modified. To make these decisions, the Commissioners intend to be fully informed of all the interests, issues and demands that could affect dam operations, Osoyoos Lake water levels and Okanogan River flows. This is particularly important since major changes have taken place in the valley in the 20 years since the previous Orders came into effect.

Accordingly, the IJC has approved a "Plan of Study" that recommends eight sub–studies to be conducted over the next three years (*see* www.ijc.org *for details*). In September 2008, The Commission began to undertake the first of these sub–studies—An Assessment of the *Most Suitable Water Levels for Osoyoos Lake During Drought Years*—in close collaboration with the Commission's International Osoyoos Lake Board of Control, and the Washington State Department of Ecology. A draft report discussing findings and recommendations is scheduled to be completed by the end of April 2009. All eight studies are expected to be completed by 2011.

IJC Asked to Coordinate Phosphorus Reduction in Missisquoi Bay

The Boundary Waters Treaty provides that the Canadian and U.S. governments may refer questions or matters of difference to the IJC for examination and report. When the IJC receives a "reference", it usually appoints an investigative board or task force to examine the facts and advise on the questions. The governments, in a Reference dated August 1, 2008, have asked the IJC to coordinate initiatives in both countries to reduce phosphorus loading to Missisquoi Bay on the north part of Lake Champlain.

The bay, which is divided by the Quebec–Vermont border, has one of the highest in–lake phosphorus concentrations of any part of Lake Champlain. The IJC, in a 2005 report, identified the water quality status in Missisquoi Bay as an urgent matter of binational concern and recommended that the two federal governments take the necessary steps, individually and jointly, to assist in reducing phosphorus levels. According to the report, phosphorus loads and ambient levels greatly exceed the target levels established by the provincial and state governments. Phosphorus contributes significantly to blooms of blue–green algae during the summer months. These blooms are frequently so dense that recreational use is impeded for many weeks at a time.

The Reference recognizes recent advances made by the Province of Quebec in reducing phosphorus loads within its areas of jurisdiction, and specifically asks the Commission to coordinate a number of tasks on the U.S. side of the border in partnership with the Lake Champlain Basin Program, including:

- identification of *critical source areas* in the watershed that contribute disproportionately to phosphorus levels;
- acquisition and compilation of necessary data and imagery; and,
- monitoring of water quality in small tributaries over a two–year period.

The outcomes of this work are to be compiled and analyzed with other data to provide an integrated picture of the watershed on both sides of the border. Two appropriations from the U.S. Congress totaling $800,000 will support this work.

When the governments' request was announced, U.S. Section Chair Irene Brooks said, "We are pleased to take on this important binational work, which builds upon the Commission's earlier examination of the causes of elevated phosphorus levels in Missisquoi Bay."

Canadian Section Chair Herb Gray commented, "The Commission has been following the issues surrounding phosphorus loading in Missisquoi bay for several years now, and is pleased to contribute to this initiative to improve the quality of shared waters, in cooperation with the Province of Quebec and the State of Vermont."

On September 15, the Commission established the International Missisquoi Bay Study Board to help it carry out the governments' charge. The Commission's final report on the work carried out under the Reference is to be completed by December 2011.

International Watersheds Initiative Project Proposals Approved

In September 2008, the Commission approved 10 proposals for projects under the International Watersheds Initiative (IWI). The proposals were submitted over the summer by IJC boards covering the Rainy, Red, Souris and Osoyoos basins, with the aim of helping to implement an integrated, ecosystem approach in their respective transboundary watersheds.

In their diversity and variety, the successful proposals demonstrated how each board has identified and acted on its own priorities in response to local needs and challenges. Here are some examples:

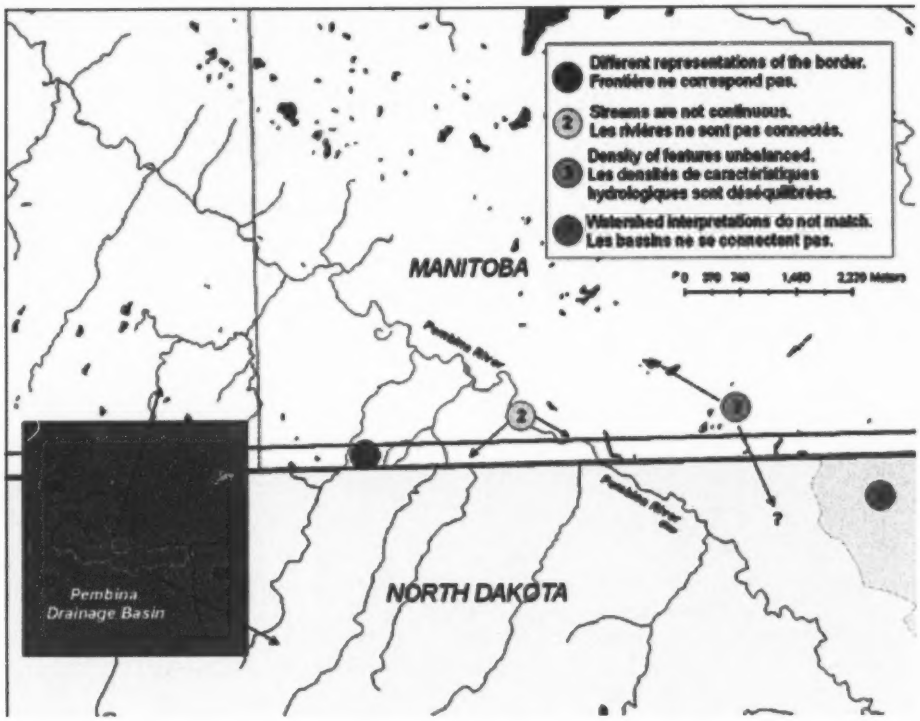
- The International Rainy Lake Board of Control and the International Rainy River Water Pollution Board jointly requested support for development of a hydraulic flow model to better understand the impact of several connecting narrows that restrict the flow in the Namakan chain of lakes. These models will help the boards prepare for the 2015 review of the IJC rule curves that govern the outflow of Rainy and Namakan lakes.
- The International Red River Board submitted six successful proposals. One of these was a project to compile in a single, readily accessible publication the valuable lessons learned regarding transboundary cooperation on flood control since the catastrophic flooding of 1997. Another was to support a university team's analysis of Red River water quality trends at the international boundary, examining the relationship with land use and climatic changes. A third proposal was to support an ongoing study of fish parasites and pathogens aimed at evaluating the potential impact of outflows from Devils Lake on downstream biota.
- The International Souris River Board saw a need for enhanced public outreach and requested support to prepare an information bulletin and fact sheets describing the hydrology, water quality and water management challenges in the Souris River basin, together with information about the board and other water management agencies.
- The International Osoyoos Lake Board of Control identified the need to enhance transboundary cooperation through the creation of seamless hydrographic datasets and associated data layers covering the entire Okanagan basin. It requested support for collaborative work that will lead to a merged database and new maps at a scale useful to planners and managers.

These and other proposals were submitted, reviewed and selected under a new process instituted in June 2008 upon the recommendations of the International Watersheds Initiative Workshop, held March 18–19, 2008, in Vancouver, B.C. (*see Focus, Summer 2008*). The Commission seeks to increase transparency and accountability in board projects designed and implemented under the IWI.

For more information, visit: www.ijc.org/conseil_board/watershed/en/ watershed_home_accueil.htm.

IJC Convenes Task Force to Standardize Transboundary Hydrographic Data and Maps

In July 2008, the International Joint Commission convened in Ottawa the first meeting the Transboundary Hydrographic Data Harmonization Task Force (THDHTF). This binational group includes representatives of Canadian and U.S. federal agencies that produce, maintain and use maps and geospatial data related to rivers, lakes, streams and other topographic features. The aim is to coordinate and facilitate the work of these agencies in the development of shared, consistent and compatible geographic information systems (GIS) for watersheds along the international border. Currently, most hydrographic datasets and maps created and maintained by the two federal governments or the provinces and states stop abruptly at the border. The task of reconciling and matching up such information is referred to as *data harmonization*.


Different representations of the border.
Frontière ne correspond pas.
Streams are not continuous.
Les rivières ne sont pas connectés.
Density of features unbalanced.
Les densités de caractéristiques hydrologiques sont déséquilibrées.
Watershed interpretations do not match.
Les bassins ne se connectent pas.
MANITOBA
NORTH DAKOTA
Pembina Drainage Basin

The IJC's interest in data harmonization flows from a 1998 reference asking the Commission to develop and implement, on a pilot basis, the International Watersheds Initiative (IWI), which encourages an integrated, participatory approach to transboundary basins. The Commission quickly realized that an essential, early step in fostering an ecosystem approach in each basin is the development of a better hydrological understanding of the watershed. This requires consistent, coherent and compatible data that cover the area seamlessly, notwithstanding the international boundary. An IJC–funded pilot exercise in the St. Croix River watershed (*see Focus, Summer 2008*) was successful in creating merged datasets and maps for this Maine–New Brunswick basin but underscored the need for greater involvement by relevant federal agencies in both countries in order to make more rapid progress in merging and using geospatial data along the entire Canada–U.S. border.

At the July meeting of the task force, representatives of Agriculture and Agri–Foods Canada, Environment Canada, Natural Resources Canada, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the IJC took stock of work already underway and discussed ways to move forward. The task force agreed on the goal of completing, by March 2010, the following tasks:

- harmonization of water–related geospatial datasets at a resolution suitable for local water resource planning and management along the boundary;
- preparation of technical guidance and documentation of ongoing and future harmonization activities;
- incorporation of the harmonized data into the participating agencies' respective geospatial programs and databases;
- building a shared and sustainable data dissemination plan for all the harmonized data products; and,
- encouraging the development of applications and best practices to help others

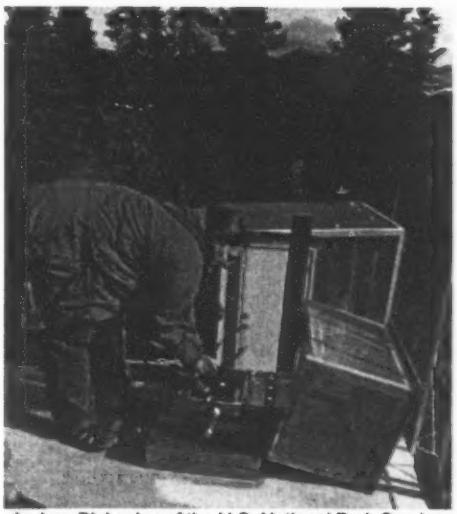
use the harmonized data effectively.

While responsibility for this work rests with the individual agencies, the IJC was pleased to be able to serve as a catalyst, bringing together the relevant technical experts and water managers. The Commission believes this data harmonization initiative will hasten the day when border communities concerned about water quality, availability and use will have access to seamless maps and data that provide an integrated picture of transboundary watersheds.

IAQAB Studies Alaska–Yukon Air Quality Issues

With most of the 8,891 kilometer (5,525 miles) Canada–U.S. border running along the southern 49th parallel, it is easy to forget that a northern frontier also separates the two countries—2,475 kilometers (1,538 miles) shared by British Columbia and the Yukon Territory, on one side, and Alaska, on the other. Recently, however, this boundary was the subject of attention by the Commission's International Air Quality Advisory Board (IAQAB), which convened a two day expert consultation in Anchorage to examine the issue of air contaminants in the north and their impacts on the ecosystem and human health. This meeting was followed by a field trip to study air monitoring in Denali National Park, which is a Class 1 Airshed and clean coal technology at the Healey Power Plant.

Some 45 experts took part in the consultation, coming from academia and all levels of government, and from as far away as New Brunswick and Maryland. U.S. Commissioner Allen Olson welcomed participants on behalf of the Commission. The consultation took place in the Alaska Regional Office headquarters of the U.S. National Park Service, which played a key role in organizing the event.



Andrea Blakesley of the U.S. National Park Service checking instrumentation at the Denali National Park Air Monitoring station.

There were four topic–specific sessions: Long Range Transport of Contaminants and Possible Sources; Monitoring Air Contaminants; Airborne Contaminants in Fish and Other Foods and Human Health Considerations; and Alaska Case Studies, including contributions to the atmosphere from volcanic eruptions.

One major achievement was initiating a binational community of practice along the northern transboundary region. At its next meeting in January, the air board will consider how best to build on this momentum, including a possible follow–up consultation in the Yukon Territory. The board's objective is to develop recommendations for the Commission, which may then submit its advice to the two federal governments.

IJC Advisory Bodies at work on 2007–09 Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement Priorities

Every two years the Commission asks its Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA) advisory bodies to investigate a set of GLWQA Priorities. The pressing issues in the nearshore waters of the Great Lakes (*see Focus Summer 2008*) provide the framework for the current five Priorities which are being addressed through multi–board workgroups co–chaired by members of the Great Lakes Water Quality and Science Advisory boards. Draft reports on the nearshore framework and priorities will be available to the public in June 2009 in advance of discussions at the 14th Biennial Meeting October 6–7, 2009 in Windsor, Ontario.

The *Eutrophication Priority* workgroup has developed a model framework for taking a weight–of–evidence approach to determining the cause(s) of the resurgence of eutrophication in the nearshore waters of the Great Lakes. The effects of eutrophication include the return of blue–green algae (cyanobacteria) blooms and rotting masses of the green macro–alga, *Cladophora*, in shallow waters and on beaches in all of the Great Lakes except Lake Superior. Effects may also include the persistence and possible expansion of hypoxia (dissolved–oxygen depletion) in the bottom waters of Lake Erie's central basin (the so–called "dead zone"). Information for the model is being compiled by conducting a literature review on eutrophication research since the early 1990s when this issue reemerged in the Great Lakes with adverse environmental and economic consequences. A review is also being done of current research on eutrophication from the Commission's Great Lakes Research Inventory. In addition, the overall management goals and specific eutrophication objectives are being gathered from the Lakewide Management Plans (LaMPs) and the Lake Huron Partnership to ensure the workgroup's final report is relevant to resource managers responsible for protecting and restoring the waters of the Great Lakes basin ecosystem. The workgroup will be holding a workshop in February 2009 to refine and validate the weight–of–evidence model and develop draft recommendations to the Commission following the 14th Biennial Meeting.

The workgroup addressing the *Chemicals of Emerging Concern Priority* has developed a database of new chemicals being released into Great Lakes waters from the U.S. and Canada. The workgroup has also reviewed policies and programs of the regulatory and management framework for these new chemicals. An expert consultation will be held in early 2009 to discuss these findings with a view toward making recommendations to the Commission that are protective of the Great Lakes.

The *Binational Aquatic Invasive Species Rapid–Response Policy Framework Priority* workgroup is coordinating its activities with the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration, Great Lakes Fishery Commission, Great Lakes Commission, and other organizations that are concerned with this issue. This priority is designed to identify and address any policy gaps to effective binational rapid response to aquatic invasive species. Of specific concern is ensuring the rapid scientific assessment and binational response to new discoveries of aquatic invasive species in the Great Lakes. The workgroup is examining a range of options, lessons learned, roles and responsibilities of potential responders at all levels of government, and the legal and regulatory actions that must occur prior to the implementation of any rapid–response plan. The workgroup will provide strategic advice to the Commission and governments to help develop and implement binational rapid–response policies and plans.

The workgroup on the *Benefits and Risks of Great Lakes Fish Consumption Priority* is assembling information by lake and by fish species on the levels of omega–3 fatty acids and contaminants in Great Lakes fish. The workgroup is also compiling information on seafood and Great Lakes fish consumption by basin subpopulations including vulnerable groups such as pregnant women, children, subsistence anglers, and urban poor. Research on the health effects of omega–3 fatty acids and fish protein is also being gathered. The workgroup plans to conduct a technical session in the spring of 2009 and, along with the other priority workgroups, host a public session at the Commission's October 6–7, 2009 Biennial Meeting.

Through a series of white papers and Basin activities, the workgroup on the *Great Lakes Beaches and Recreational Water Quality Priority* is assessing innovative methods in rapid detection, source tracking, and best management practices for beaches. Currently the workgroup is reviewing the first set of white papers:

- *Fecal Indicator Monitoring: Advantages, Disadvantages, and Steps Toward Refinement;*
- *Issues Related to Inconsistent Water Quality Criteria Applications at Great Lakes Beaches; and,*
- *Local Economic Effects of Impaired Recreation Water Quality: Summary Report on Great Lakes Beaches for the International Joint Commission.*

Upcoming is a white paper on the *Human Health Effects of Impaired Recreational Water Quality*, a review of recommendations in the May 2007 GAO report *Implementing the Beach Act in the Great Lakes*, and an update of the 2004 Nevers & Whitman report *Protecting Visitor Health in Beach Waters of Lake Michigan: Problems and Opportunities*. The workgroup participated in the recent Great Lakes Beach Association Conference in Indiana and will be contributing to SOLEC 2008 in Niagara Falls, Ontario. The workgroup will provide a final synthesis report with key findings, actionable advice and recommendations to Commissioners, governments, and the public on improving recreational water quality in the Basin.

To receive updates on these Priority efforts and the Biennial Meeting, please contact Doug Bondy at 519/257–6714 (or in the U.S. call 313/226–2170 ext. 6714) or via email at bondyd@windsor.ijc.org.

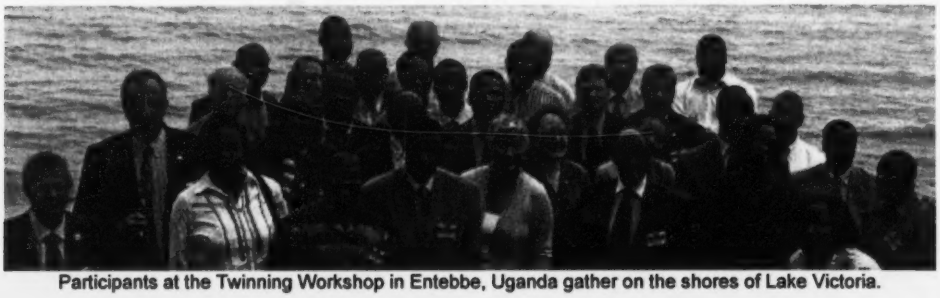
Twinning the North American and African Great Lakes

Irene Brooks, IJC U.S. Section Chair, and IJC staff, Jim Houston and John Gannon, represented the IJC at a Twinning Workshop held on the shores of Lake Victoria in Entebbe, Uganda, September 24–26, 2008. The workshop is part of a project funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and was hosted by the Lake Victoria Basin Commission and United Nations University. The purpose of the workshop was to strengthen the knowledge base on issues common to the North American and African Great Lakes and to share experiences on improving the use of science in resource management and policy decision– making. More than 60 people participated in the workshop, including representatives from IJC, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization, Lake Victoria Basin Commission, Lake Tanganyika Authority, governmental officials and academia.

This twining initiative is important because the health and sustainability of the great lakes of the world have significance not only to the countries bordering them, but also to the surrounding regions and even the global community. The waters and fisheries of these large lake ecosystems provide enormous economic benefits, but sustaining these benefits requires informed and effective management. Collaborative transboundary management of the waters of the North American Great Lakes has been underway for nearly a century and their fisheries for over 50 years; whereas the transboundary institutions on the African great lakes have formed in recent years. As a result, the GEF project is "twinning" the North American and African transboundary institutions to learn from each other and to accelerate the capacity and effectiveness of the African institutions based on the longer history and experience of the North American commissions.

With productive dialogue, exchange of scientific knowledge, sharing of policy ideas and

the building of personal relationships, the Entebbe workshop laid a foundation for a long term productive partnership.



Participants at the Twinning Workshop in Entebbe, Uganda gather on the shores of Lake Victoria.

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Top

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